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## MEKONG VITALITY EXPANDED ALLIANCE

JULY 2014 – DECEMBER 2017 | IMPLEMENTER: PACT | PLANNED BUDGET: \$600,000

To help Vietnam's growth benefit a broader population and sustainably raise incomes of marginalized people, the Mekong Vitality Expanded Alliance supports women's microenterprise development and business leadership in Vietnam's Mekong Delta region. The project delivers business skills training, improves linkages to trade and markets and uses mobile technology training to support women-led savings and loan groups that empower female entrepreneurs.

### DEVELOPING WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

The Alliance transforms women from microenterprise operators to entrepreneurs and business leaders who are fully engaged in their communities by providing microfinance loans and equipping them with knowledge and skills in business practices, market forces, trading opportunities and value chain analysis. Supported by sector-specific training, they take leadership roles and strengthen linkages across the local economy to help take advantage of market opportunities.

### INTRODUCING INNOVATIVE TECHNOLOGY

Mobile technology solutions provided by the activity help women increase their access to market information and more easily identify additional business opportunities. With smart phones, select women entrepreneurs are able to access advanced business training courses and market information, enabling them to make more informed decisions to grow their businesses. Mobile technology is changing women's engagement in the market and with customers, as well as how they network with other entrepreneurs.

### EMPOWERING WOMEN TO ADVOCATE FOR THEIR NEEDS

Through regular group activities, training courses and conversations with project empowerment workers, women create social networks that help them find ways to support one another. Increasing social networks not only strengthens their businesses, but it leads to social empowerment by raising their awareness of social issues such as domestic violence, women's voice in the family and the role of women in modern society.

### RESULTS

As of December 2016, 71 percent of women who received advanced business training started small businesses or expanded their existing businesses, 23 percent of supported women increased their household's socio-economic status, 35 percent of women reported using new sources of information to make business decisions and 36 percent of women increased their participation in social issues within their communities. Going forward, the Alliance aims to further improve women's socio-economic empowerment and enhance their leadership role in their families and communities.

*In the photo: A woman sells sticky rice from her market stall which she created after taking project-supported business training. Photo: Pact*